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CHRISTMAS MAKING

J. R. MILLER

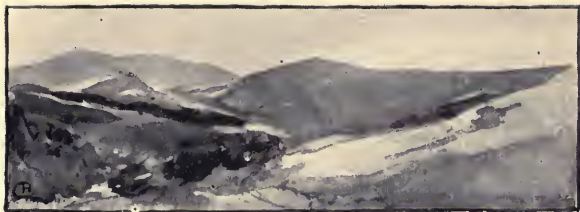




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CHRISTMAS MAKING





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BY
J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF
"WHEN THE SONG BEGINS"
"THE INNER LIFE"
ETC., ETC.

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TO THOSE EVERYWHERE WHO LOVE CHRISTMAS,
AND ARE WILLING TO LET THE LOVE OF CHRIST
HAVE ITS WAY IN THEM ; TO THOSE WHO ARE
READY ALSO TO FORGET THEMSELVES AND TO
MAKE HAPPINESS FOR OTHERS ; TO THOSE WHO
WANT TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE THE WORLD
BRIGHTER AND SWEETER, AND A BETTER PLACE
TO LIVE IN, — THESE PAGES ARE CHEERFULLY
DEDICATED.

J. R. M.

PHILADELPHIA, U. S. A.

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— •

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night —
Christmas in lands of the fir tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of palm trees and vine,
Christmas where snow-peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where cornfields lie sunny and bright —
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night.

Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,
Christmas where peace like a dove in its flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight —
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night.

For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all,
No palace too great, no cottage too small ;
The angels who welcome Him sing from the height,
“ In the city of David a King in his might ” —
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night.

Then let every heart keep its Christmas within —
Christ's pity for sorrow, Christ's hatred of sin,
Christ's care for the weakest, Christ's courage for right ;
Christ's dread of the darkness, Christ's love of the light —
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night.

— PHILLIPS BROOKS.



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THERE were two parts in the song the angels sang the night Jesus was born. The first part was an outburst of praise to God. "Glory to God in the highest." God should always be put first. He should be first in our hearts, first in our love, first in our worship, first in our trust. It was fitting that the first note of the angels' song should be to God. The great blessing of that night was God's unspeakable gift to men, and to God the highest honor should be raised. "Glory to God." Before we begin our rejoicing at the Christmas time we should bow reverently before God and praise him.

The second part of the angels' song referred to the meaning of Christmas to this world, to the blessings it would bring to the earth, to the change and transformation it would work. "On earth peace, good-will toward men."

We always have a part in making our own blessings. A friend wishes us a happy birthday. The

wish is sincere and there is a great heart of love back of it. But nothing will come of it unless we take it and make it real in our own life. God has most loving thoughts for us. He is always planning good for us. Yet even God can put his good things into our hearts and lives only through our personal acceptance and appropriation of them by faith, and our assimilation of them in our conduct and character by obedience.

Christmas as a day in the calendar comes in its season, whatever our response may be. God sends it, like his sunshine and his rain, on the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust. But Christmas in its divine meaning will become real to us only as it reënacts itself in our own experience. An old seventeenth-century poet, Angelus Silesius, writes : —

“ Though Christ a thousand times
In Bethlehem be born,
If he's not born in thee,
Thy soul is still forlorn.

“ The cross on Golgotha
Will never save thy soul,
The cross in thine own heart,
Alone can make thee whole.”

Christmas is the gladdest of all the Christian



festivals. It brings a great joy to all the earth. It is for all men. There is scarcely a home so lowly, in such neglect and poverty, but the Christmas spirit touches it with some little brightness, and the Christmas love carries into it a little breath of warmth, a thought of gentleness and kindness. There is scarcely a life so desolate, so cut off from companionship, so without the blessing of human love, but Christmas finds it with some tenderness, some sense of kinship and fellowship, some word of sympathy and cheer, some token of thought, something to brighten the dreariness and soften the hardness. The day makes nearly every little child in the land happier. It is observed in every home. Think of the millions of dollars that are spent in preparation, in buying gifts, from the simplest toys among the poor, to the most costly presents among the rich. There is no need to plead for the observance of Christmas. But there would seem to be need for serious thought about the real meaning of the day and the way to make it what we may make it, so as to get the most we can from it.

How did the world come to have a Christmas? God gave it to us. It was his gift. The story is told in the New Testament. There is one great

verse which tells how it came: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christmas thus began in the heart of God. The world did not ask for it — it was God's own thought. We love because he first loved us. All the love that warms and brightens this old earth was kindled from the one heavenly lamp that was lighted the first Christmas night. The Child that was born that first Christmas was the Son of God. God so loved the world that he gave his Son.

Think of the beginning — how small it was. It was only a baby, a baby among the poor. Think where the baby was born, — in a stable, with the cattle all about. Think where the baby slept its first sleep, — in a little box, out of which the cattle ate their fodder. All the circumstances were lowly and homely on the earth side.

The first Christmas did not mean much in the world. Its influence did not reach out far. A little company of lowly shepherds, keeping their watch in the fields, were the only persons outside, so far as we are told, who heard of the wonderful event, or came to look at the new-born Child. The first Christmas touched the shepherds with its

wonder and with its holy sentiment. But with this exception the great world slept on that night as if nothing was happening. The world does not know its greatest hours nor mark its most stupendous events.

Within the lowly cattle-shed, where the Baby lay, there was nothing which at that time seemed unusual. There was no divine splendor, such as we would expect to see in the face of one who was the Son of God. The only light was the shining of love in the peasant mother's face. When the shepherds came in, all that they saw was a newborn baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, and a quiet couple, Mary and Joseph, bending over it in tender love. Yet that was the beginning. It was a real Christmas.

There is a picture in the Dresden gallery, the *Madonna di San Sisto*, which represents the Child in the arms of the mother, surrounded by clouds. A closer view, however, shows that the clouds are myriads of angel faces, all turned toward the Holy Child. The picture is true. There must have been hosts of angels round the manger, every one turning his face with adoring wonder toward the infant Saviour. It was a bit of heaven let down to earth.

Think what the problem of Christmas was. The mission of the Christ-Child was to change the sin and sorrow of earth into the holiness and the joy of heaven. Earth was very unlike heaven that night. It was a place of selfishness, of cruelty, of strife, of sin, of wrong, of oppression, of sorrow. Millions of men were slaves. There was depravity that reeked to heaven. Governments were tyrannous. Home meant but little. Here and there a few praying souls thought of God, and a few men and women lived pure and gentle lives. But the world was full of sin. Love — of course there was natural love. Mothers loved their children, friend loved friend. But the great multitudes knew nothing of love, as we now understand the word. Love, Christian love, was born that first Christmas night. Love of God, God's own love, a spark of God's life, came down from heaven to earth when Jesus was born. Christina Rossetti puts it thus: —

“ Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, love divine ;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

“ Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for gift and plea and sign.”

What was the problem? It was for this tiny spark of love to work its way out among men, among the nations, until all the life of the earth should be touched by it, changed, purified, sweetened, softened. This is part of what Jesus meant when he spoke of a woman putting a little morsel of leaven in a great mass of dough, that it might work its way through the whole lump. We have the problem stated in the words of the angels' song, "On earth peace, good-will toward men." That is what the coming of Christ to earth in human flesh was to do—to make peace and to put into all men's hearts good-will.

"Peace." This is a great word. As we read the New Testament we find it used, for one thing, to denote the reconciliation of men to God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace with God—enmity given up, will submitted, sins abandoned, and obedience to God made the law of life. As we read on, we find that peace means also the peace of God in the heart, Christ's peace ruling in the life. To have this peace is to be well advanced in the school of Christ. Jesus said that in wearing his yoke and learning of him we shall find rest in our souls.

Peace means also peace with each other, peace

among men. Remembering the late terrible Eastern war, it would seem that universal peace is still far away, an impracticable and impossible dream. Yet that was the problem of Christ's mission announced the first Christmas night — "On earth peace."

There is no doubt that the problem will be worked out in the end. One of the prophetic visions of the Messiah's reign represents the peoples of the world beating their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. Then we have this assurance, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." A picture of peace shows a cannon lying in a meadow, and a lamb nibbling grass at its mouth. The picture is not ideal, for the implement of war still exists, though unused. The prophet's picture is better — the sword no longer a sword, but made into a ploughshare, an emblem of husbandry, and the soldiers' spears hammered into pruning-hooks which are used in dressing the vines. There are intimations that the day is not far distant when war shall cease from the face of the earth and when differences between nations shall be settled by the arbitrament of love, and no longer by an appeal to battle.

"Good-will toward men." The best definition



W. H. P. 1871

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of these words is — love. Jesus put it, “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” To have good-will toward men is to love men — not merely those who love us, but those who do not love us. An English bishop said the best definition of the commandment of love to men he had ever seen was given by a plain woman, — “To love like God is to love people we don’t like.” It means also to love those who do not like us. It means to forgive — not three times, nor seven times, but seventy times seven. Good-will to men means not only charity toward all, but sincere interest in all men, the seeking of the highest good of every man.

Some one writes: “Cultivate kindness of heart; think well of your fellow-men; look with charity upon the shortcomings in their lives; do a good turn for them as opportunity offers; and, finally, don’t forget the kind word at the right time. How much such a word of kindness, encouragement, or appreciation means to others sometimes, and how little it costs us to give it!”

If we really have in our hearts good-will to men, we shall not only wish every one well, but we shall seek every opportunity to do good to every one. It will make us good neighbors, kind, obliging, ready always to lend a hand, to do another a good turn

When there is sickness or trouble in the home of a neighbor, we will show our sympathy by rendering any service that may be needed. Of a kindly man it was said that he lived by the side of the road, that he might be among people and have a chance to help them. It is in practical ways that good-will to men shows itself. It does not wait to do large things, but heeds the calls of need as they come, however small they may be. Norman MacLeod writes the lesson into a little creed:—

“I believe in human kindness,
Large amid the sons of men,
Nobler far in willing blindness
Than the censure’s keenest ken.
I believe in self-denial,
And its secret throb of joy ;
In the love that lives through trial,
Dying not, though death destroy.

“I believe in love renewing
All that sin hath swept away,
Leavenlike its work pursuing
Night by night and day by day ;
In the power of its remodelling,
In the grace of its reprieve,
In the glory of beholding
Its perfection — I believe.”

The problem of Christmas the night Jesus was born was to set all this good-will to work in the world.





A great deal has been done in these long Christian centuries in the carrying out of this programme. In Christian lands there is much that is very beautiful in the way the poor, the old, the blind, the orphan, the sick, and all unfortunate ones are cared for, and in the spirit of kindness and charity which prevails in society. All this has been brought about by the diffusion of the love of God among men. What marvellous changes have been wrought may be seen by comparing Christian countries like England and America with heathen lands like China and Africa. But the work is not yet finished. The whole world has not yet been transformed into the sweetness, purity, and beauty of heaven. Where most has been done there still is much to do.

We may bring the subject closer home. What is our personal part in the making of Christmas? After all, that is the most important question for us. We cannot do any other one's part, and no other can do ours. Some people spend so much time looking after their neighbor's garden that the weeds grow in their own and choke out the plants and flowers. What about the little patch of God's great world that is given us to tend? If the problem of the church is to make Christmas in every

part of the earth, one small portion belongs to every one of us.

Each one should seek to make Christmas first in his own heart and life. Christmas is Christlikeness. The life of heaven came down to earth in Jesus and began in the lowly place where he was born. Is there any measure of that same sweet, gentle, pure, quiet, lowly life in us? It ought to be a very practical matter. Some people get the sentiment of love; but the love fails in its working out in their disposition, conduct, and character. The kind of love a Christian wants is something that will show itself in deeds. Some one tells of seeing a little lame dog trying to climb up the curbstone from the street to the pavement. But the poor creature could not quite reach the top—he would always fall back. A hundred people passed by and watched the dog, laughed at his efforts and failures, and went on. No one offered to help him. Then a working man came along, a rather rough-looking man. He saw the dog and pitied him, and getting down on his knees beside the curb, he lifted the little creature up to the sidewalk, and then went quietly on. That man possessed the true spirit of love. That is what Christ would have done. Love is shown quite as unmistakably

in the way a man treats a dog as in the spirit he shows toward his own fellows.

A Christmas letter has this sentence, referring to some things that had not gone quite right: "There have been mistakes, but this is a good time of year to forget them." That is part of the teaching of Christmas—to forget the mistakes others have made, as well as our own, to wipe off the slate the records of any wrongs others may have done us, any injuries they may have inflicted on us. Some one tells of a certain tree in a tropical country which when struck and bruised bleeds fragrant balsam. So it should be with us when others hurt us, smite us with unkindness—if we bleed, we should bleed love, not anger, not bitterness.

Christmas is a good day to forgive any who in any way have done us harm. St. Paul's counsel is not to let the sun go down upon our wrath. Surely we should not let the sun of the Christmas Eve go down on any feeling of anger or bitterness, any grudge or hatred, in our hearts. Everything that is unloving should be swept away as we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

"Now bury with the dead years conflicts dead,
And with fresh days let all begin anew."

We should not forget the word "peace," in our lesson. "On earth peace." We should seek for the things which make for peace. It is easy to misunderstand others, even our dearest friends. One may hold a penny before his eye so that it will shut out all the beautiful sky, all the blue and all the stars. It is easy, too, to make little offences grow large as we brood over them, until, held up before our face, they hide whole fields of beauty and good in the lives of our friends. An unpleasant word is spoken thoughtlessly by some one and we fret and vex ourselves over it, lying awake all night thinking of it, and by to-morrow it has grown into what seems an unpardonable wrong that our friend has committed against us. But Christ's way is different—he turns the other cheek. He forgives, he forgets, he blots out the record and goes on loving just as before, as if nothing had happened.

The Christmas spirit teaches us to deal in the same way with those who injure us. Life is too short to mind such hurts, which oftentimes are as much woundings of our own pride or self-esteem as real injuries to us. In any case, heavenly love ignores them. One says, "The hurts of friendship, of social life, of household familiarity, must be ignored, got over, forgotten, as are the hurts, the



wounds, the bruises, the scratches of briers or thorns on our bodies."

"Life is too short for aught but high endeavor,
Too short for spite, but long enough for love.
And love lives on forever and forever;
It links the worlds that circle on above;
'Tis God's first law, the universe's lever,
In his vast realm the radiant soul sighs never,
'Life is too short.'"

If we would make it really Christmas in our own hearts, we must learn to forget ourselves and to think of others. We must stop keeping account of what we have done for other people, and begin to put down in place what other people have done for us. We must cease thinking what others owe to us, and remember what we owe to them, and that we owe Christ and the world the best we have to give of life and love. We must give up chafing about our rights and begin to rejoice in giving up our rights and doing our duties. Some one says that the best thing about rights is that they are our own and we can give them up. We must no longer sit on little thrones and expect people to show us honor, attention, and deference, and to bow down to us and serve us, but, instead, must get down into the lowly places of love and begin to serve others, even the lowliest, in the lowliest ways. That is the way our Master did.

A book by a brilliant writer, about keeping Christmas, contains this paragraph, which is worth quoting: "Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front, so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open — are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas."

We must make Christmas first in our own heart before we can make it for any other. A grumpy person, a selfish person, a tyrannous and despotic person, an uncharitable, unforgiving person, cannot enter into the spirit of Christmas himself and cannot add to the blessing of Christmas for his friends or neighbors. The day must begin within, in one's own heart. But it will not end there. We must

be a maker of Christmas for others or we cannot make a real Christmas for ourselves. We need the sharing of our joy in order to its real possession. If we try to keep our Christmas all to ourselves, we will miss half its sweetness.

“The Holy Supper is kept indeed,
In whatso we share with another’s need ;
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare.”

There would seem not to be any need at the Christmastide to say a word to urge people to be kind to others and to do things for them. Everybody we meet at this season carries an armful of mysterious bundles. For weeks before the happy day the stores are thronged with people buying all sorts of gifts. To the homes of the poor, baskets by hundreds are sent, with their provision for Christmas dinners and their toys for the children. The spirit of giving is in the very air. Even the churl and the miser are generous and liberal for the time. Everybody catches the spirit of giving for once in the year.

But this is not the only way to do good, to help others. In a story a good man says, “It’s very hard to know how to help people when you can’t send them blankets, or coal, or Christmas dinners.”

With many people this is very true. They know of no way of helping others save by giving them material things. Yet there are better ways of doing good than by sending a dinner, or clothing, or a picture for the wall, or silverware for the table. One may have no money to spend and yet may be a liberal benefactor. We may help others by sympathy, by cheer, by encouragement.

A good woman when asked at Thanksgiving time for what she was most grateful, said that that which, above all other things, she was thankful for at the end of the year was courage. She had been left with a family of children to care for and the burden had been very heavy. Again and again she had been on the point of giving up in the despair of defeat. But through the cheer and encouragement received from a friend she had been kept brave and strong through all the trying experience. Her courage had saved her. It is a great thing to be such an encourager—there is no other way in which we can help most people better than by giving them courage. Without such inspiration many persons sink down in their struggles and fail. To many persons—to far more than we think, life is very hard, and it is easy for them to faint in the way. What they need, however, is



not to have the load lifted off, or to be taken out of the hard fight, but to be strengthened to go on victoriously. The help they need is not in temporal things, but in sympathy and heartening.

So far as we are told, Jesus never sent people blankets to keep them warm, or fuel for their fires, or Christmas dinners, or toys for the children. Yet there never was such a helper of others as he was. He had the marvellous power of putting himself under people's loads by putting himself into people's lives. There is a tremendous power of helpfulness in true sympathy, and Jesus sympathized with all sorrow and all hardness of condition. He loved people — that was the great secret of his helpfulness. He felt men's sufferings. In all their afflictions he was afflicted. One said, "If I were God, my heart would break with the sorrows of the world." He was blaming God for permitting such sufferings, such calamities, such troubles, as daily history records. He said God was cruel to look on in silence and not put a stop to these terrible things. "If I were God, my heart would break over such anguish and pain as are in the world." He did not understand that that was just what the heart of Christ did — it broke with compassion, with love, with sorrow, over the world's woes. Thus he was enabled to become the

world's Redeemer. He was a marvellous helper of others — not by giving material things, but by imparting spiritual help. It is right to give gifts at Christmas — they do good, if they are carefully and wisely chosen and are given with the desire to do good. But let us seek to be helpers also in higher ways.

We can help greatly by being happiness makers. Some one says, "Blessed are the happiness makers. Blessed are they that remove friction, that make the courses of life smooth, and the intercourse of men gentle." There is far more need of this sort of help than most of us imagine. We think most people are quite happy. We have no conception of the number of people about us who are lonely, and find their loneliness almost unbearable at such times as the Christmastide.

Perhaps nearly every one of us knows at least one person who will have no home on next Christmas Day but a dreary room in a boarding house — a pleasant enough room in itself, it may be, but made dreary by the absence of home's loved ones. You do not know what a blessing you may be to this homeless one if you will in some way put a taste of home into his experience even for one hour on Christmas. Jesus has told us how near these



lonely ones are to him. He knew what it was to have no place to go at the close of the day when the people scattered off, every one to his own house, leaving him alone, with no invitation to any one's hospitality and no place but the mountains to go for the night. Then he tells us that if we open our door to a stranger and take him in, it is the same as if we had opened the door and taken in Jesus himself. He is pleased, therefore, when, in any loving way, we make Christmas a little less lonely for some homesick one.

A word may be said, too, to those who will be alone on Christmas, who are away from their homes, or have no longer any home. There is a way in which they can do much to make the day brighter for themselves. Though no taste or touch of human fellowship and friendship be theirs that day, they need not grow disheartened. George Macdonald says, "To be able to have the things we want — that is riches; but to be able to do without them — that is power." This is then the lesson of loneliness — to gain the victory over it. One of the problems of life is to live independently of circumstances and conditions. St. Paul said he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therein to be content. The secret was in himself. He carried

in his own mind and heart the resources he needed. No matter how bare his life was of comforts, or how full of trials and sufferings, the peace and joy within were not disturbed. It may not be easy for the lonely ones, lacking the companionship and fellowship of home and its happiness, to go through a Christmastide as if nothing were wanting. Yet there is a way to overcome in great measure the want of fellowship. Much can be done by thinking of others who are lonely, and doing what we can to carry cheer to them. In doing this we will forget our own lonely condition. Then we can turn our heart-hunger toward Christ, who is willing always to give us his joy. Here is a little prayer for lonely people which some may find fitting for the Christmastide.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER FOR THE LONELY.¹

My Father, I miss the gladness which many of thine other children are enjoying to-day. They have their homes and friends and happy fellowships, while I am alone. Yet may I have a joyous Christmas even without these bright things. Let

¹ By permission of *The Youth's Companion*.

me not envy those who have the blessings which I do not have. Save me from all bitter feeling, all complaining, all homesickness, and all unhappiness because of my circumstances. Help me to remember the loneliness of Jesus, who was born in poverty and found no welcome in this world, and to be contented in my condition as he was in his.

I pray for others who are lonely like myself, away from their homes ; for the very poor to whom the day will bring but little gladness ; for the children whose dream of Christmas has been disappointed ; for the sick, the sorrowing, and the weary. In the great wave of good feeling which spreads everywhere to-day, may some touch of human kindness reach every one of these heart-hungry ones.

Grant me the privilege of carrying a little Christmas gladness to some who but for me would go unblest. Lead me to one, at least, to whom a kindly word will be a benediction. Let me give cheer to one who is discouraged. Give me the privilege of making real to some one the sweetness and warmth of the love of Christ.

So I pray, my Father, that this wondrous day may not pass without leaving something of its glad, loving spirit in my heart, and something of its

quickenings in my life. May I get a new vision of the divine love. May I be cleansed of the sin which has left its sad blots on all my old year's pages. May I from to-day live more beautifully, less selfishly, less wilfully, more helpfully than ever before. May I find comfort hereafter for my loneliness in closer companionship with Christ and in a life of love and service. Grant these blessings, I beseech thee, in his name. Amen.

“Good-will toward men.” Good-will means kindness, sympathy, love. It means that we shall have no bitter feeling toward any one, no unkind thought, no dislike. This man who jostled against me to-day is my brother. Perhaps it was as much my fault as his. I may have put myself obstinately in his way. Most likely at least he did it unintentionally. Let me then forgive him, or even ask his pardon for being in the way when he stumbled.

We may read the Gospels to see how Jesus showed good-will to men, for he gave us the pattern for every beautiful thing he would have us do. A frown never came upon his face when some one had been rude or unkind to him. Nothing ever caused him to show annoyance, however many things there were to disturb and vex him. The people were





selfish and ill-mannered in pressing about him. They gave him no time to rest or to eat. They even broke in upon him when he was at his private devotions. But his patience and kindness never failed. Nothing ever ruffled or interrupted his composure or irritated him in the slightest way. They told him that the woman at his feet was not good, that her character was stained, and that he should not let her touch him. But he continued his gracious kindness to her as if she had been the best woman in the land. They hated and persecuted him, hurt him and insulted him, spitting in his face, at last nailing him on the cross; but he went on loving, never complaining, never resisting, showing no resentment.

That is what good-will to men means. Can we learn the lesson? That is part of what our Christmas-making means. On Christmas Day we feel "kindly affectioned" toward all the world. We would not do harm to any one. We let nothing annoy or vex us. We try to keep our spirit sweet even amid the most irritating experiences. We forgive those who have wronged us. We give up grudges and resentments. We are glad of any opportunity to be kind to those who have been unkind to us. The problem is to keep up this good-will to-morrow, to

take it out with us into the life of the days after Christmas, and to keep on making Christmas wherever we go all the days of the new year. If we do all this it will not take long to bring in the reign of love.

A prayer has been suggested appropriate for those who are lonely at the Christmastide. It seems fitting to suggest also a prayer for those who are happy in their own homes or in circles of friends.

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS MORNING.

On this Christmas Day, my Father, I come to thee with a glad heart. Help me to observe the day fitly, with loving remembrance of the lowly birth in Bethlehem and the sorrows of him who came to bring redemption, and with grateful thanks to thee for thy great mercy.

May this be a true Christmas in my heart. Take away all unbelief, all bitter thought and feeling, all resentment and unforgiveness, all unholy desire, and give me love, love that suffereth long and is kind, that is not provoked, that thinketh no evil, that seeketh not its own. Save me from all selfishness. While I gratefully receive the Christmas



blessings and enjoy them, may my heart be opened toward all the world in sympathy and kindly interest. Make my life a song, and may I go everywhere with joy on my face and on my lips.

I pray for all those to whom Christmas brings gladness, that their joy may be enriched by thoughts of the divine love. I pray for the multitudes of little children everywhere, to whom the day means so much, who have been waiting for it so long in eager expectancy, and who will be happy with their gifts and with the love that blesses them.

I pray also for those to whom the day brings little of joy — the very poor, the lonely and solitary; those far away from their homes, whose hearts will not be warmed by human love; prisoners in their prisons; sailors on the sea, and those who know not thee. I pray for the sick in their homes and in the hospitals, that in their suffering they may be comforted by the remembrance of the divine compassion. I pray for the bereft and sorrowing, to whom Christmas brings painful memories, making more real their sense of loss. May they find comfort in the thought of Christ's unfailing love.

May this glad Christmas leave my life richer and tenderer. May the love of God henceforth be

more real to me. May I be surer of the divine care and guidance. May my heart be warmer toward my fellows, tenderer in its sympathy with human need and sorrow, and may I live a gentler, more kindly life, because of this day's revealing of God's love. Grant these favors through Jesus Christ. Amen.



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